

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 IO-13 EUR-12 EB-07 OES-07
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FM AMEMBASSY TOKYO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8614
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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: JA US KS PFOR
SUBJECT: RECENT JAPANESE MEDIA TREATMENT OF KOREAN TROOP
WITHDRAWAL

SUMMARY: MEDIA COVERAGE OF KOREAN TROOP WITHDRAWAL STIMULATED
BY BROWN-HABIB VISIT AND THEIR SUBSEQUENT CONGRESSIONAL
TESTIMONY HAS BEEN RELATIVELY RESTRAINED, SUGGESTING THAT
WITHDRAWAL DECISION HAS BEEN DEFUSED AS IMMEDIATE POLITICAL
ISSUE FOR JAPANESE. NEVERTHELESS, THERE ARE PERSISTENT
SIGNS OF UNDERLYING UNEASINESS ABOUT IMPLICATIONS FOR
FUTURE COURSE OF US FOREIGN POLICY IN EAST ASIA.
END SUMMARY.

1. JAPANESE MEDIA TREATMENT OVER PAST WEEKS OF PROPOSED
WITHDRAWAL OF US GROUND FORCES FROM ROK HAS BEEN RELATIVELY
RESTRAINED. SINGLAUB DISMISSAL, BROWN-HABIB VISIT AND THEIR
SUBSEQUENT CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY HAVE GENERATED MOMENTARY
HEADLINES, BUT MEDIA COVERAGE HAS BEEN FAR MORE
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FACTUAL AND DISPASSIONATE THAN SENSATIONAL TREATMENT
SOME MONTHS BACK. LOW-KEY TREATMENT HAS RESULTED
FROM GOJ'S ACCEPTANCE OF FINALITY OF US DECISION;
INCREASED UNDERSTANDING OF MODALITIES OF WITHDRAWAL;
AND MORE REALISTIC PUBLIC ATTITUDE OF ROK.
WITHDRAWAL PLANS AS OUTLINED IN RECENT PRESIDENTIAL
STATEMENTS AND HABIB-BROWN BRIEFINGS REVEALED NO

MAJOR SURPRISES FOR JAPANESE. FURTHERMORE, DRAWN-OUT NATURE OF DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY SURROUNDING PROPOSED WITHDRAWAL HAS NOT LENT ITSELF TO SUSTAINED AND INTENSE PUBLIC ATTENTION (IN MARKED CONTRAST WITH HOURLY DEVELOPMENTS IN SOVIET FISHERIES NEGOTIATIONS WHICH DOMINATED MEDIA THROUGH OUT MAY).

2. NEVERTHELESS, SOME EDITORIALS AND COMMENTARY FOLLOWING BROWN-HABIB VISIT CONTINUE TO VOICE CONCERN, LESS WITH MILITARY SPECIFICS OF WITHDRAWAL THAN WITH PERCEIVED IMPLICATIONS OF WITHDRAWAL DECISION FOR BOTH US AND JAPANESE FOREIGN POLICIES. MAINICHI AND OTHERS, FOR INSTANCE, COMPLAINED THAT MUCH-VAUNTED CONSULTATIONS WITH GOJ AND ROK WERE NOT REALLY SUCH, BUT AMOUNTED TO SIMPLE ANNOUNCEMENT OF UNILATERAL DECISION ON PART OF US. THEY REGARDED MANNER IN WHICH WITHDRAWAL DECISION HAS BEEN HANDLED THUS FAR AS EVIDENCE OF GREATER US PREOCCUPATION WITH DOMESTIC POLITICAL CONCERNS AND DIMINISHED INTEREST IN ASIAN REGIONAL CONSIDERATIONS. ASAHI SOUNDED COMMON THEME THAT WITHDRAWAL DECISION SOMEHOW REFLECTED SHIFT OF CARTER ADMINISTRATION TOWARDS GREATER "MORALITY" IN US FOREIGN POLICY. THERE WAS APPREHENSION THAT THIS EMPHASIS ON MORALITY WOULD CAUSE "CONFUSION" IN US POLICIES AND MIGHT TRANSLATE INTO ISOLATIONISM ON PART OF US.

3. NIHON KEIZAI NOTED STRAINS PLACED ON US-ROK RELATIONSHIP BY WITHDRAWAL, PARTICULARLY REMOVAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OF TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS OVER SEOUL'S OBJECTIONS. THERE WAS UNEASINESS THAT KOREAN DISSATISFACTION WITH US ACTIONS MIGHT STRENGTHEN HAND OF THOSE WITHIN ROK WHO SOUGHT DEVELOPMENT OF INDEPENDENT NUCLEAR CAPABILITY. IN SEPARATE COMMENTARY, NIHON KEIZAI OBSERVED THAT WITHDRAWAL WOULD CREATE ENVIRONMENT IN NE ASIA IN WHICH JAPAN WOULD HAVE TO PLAY MORE ACTIVE DIPLOMATIC ROLE. IN THIS CONNECTION, PAPER SUGGESTED GOJ PURSUE IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS WITH NORTH KOREA, PROMOTION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE AS DEVICE TO ENSURE REGIONAL STABILITY, AND DIPLOMATIC INITIATIVES IN SUPPORT OF NORTH-SOUTH KOREAN NON-AGGRESSION TREATY.

4. MOST PAPERS PICKED UP JCS CHAIRMAN BROWN'S CONGRESSIONAL TESTIMONY WHICH INCLUDED US FORCES ON OKINAWA AS PART OF DETERRENT AGAINST NORTH KOREAN AGGRESSION. PRESS SPECULATED THAT IF US BASES IN JAPAN WERE TO BE SO CLOSELY TIED TO

DEFENSE OF ROK, RE-EXAMINATION OF "PRIOR CONSULTATION"
SYSTEM WITHIN US-JAPAN SECURITY TREATY MIGHT BECOME NECESSARY.

5. COMMENT: OUR RECENT CONTACTS WITH WIDE RANGE
OF JAPANESE OUTSIDE OF GOVERNMENT SUGGEST THAT MEDIA,
ALTHOUGH OFTEN IMPERFECT MIRROR OF PUBLIC OPINION,
IN THIS CASE PROBABLY REFLECTS ACCURATELY POPULAR
RESPONSE TO PROPOSED TROOP WITHDRAWAL. MEDIA TREAT-
MENT HAS NOT DISPLAYED UNDUE EXCITEMENT AND IT
SEEMS SAFE TO SAY THAT FOR MOMENT AT LEAST, WITH-
DRAWAL HAS BEEN DEFUSED AS US-JAPAN POLITICAL ISSUE
OF IMMEDIATE ATTENTION. NEVERTHELESS, ILL-DEFINED
SENSE OF UNCERTAINTY AND UNEASINESS OVER US
INTENTIONS IN ASIA CONTINUES TO SURFACE, PARTICULARLY
IN PRIVATE CONVERSATIONS WITH POLITICIANS, COMMENTATORS,
AND OTHERS.

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Message Attributes

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